

THE
UNITARIAN
CHURCH

Its History and Characteristics

A STATEMENT

BY

REV. JOSEPH HENRY CROOKER, D.D.

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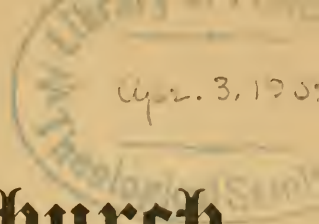
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REV. JOSEPH HENRY CROOKER, D.D.

These churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this pamphlet is to give briefly and clearly certain information about the Unitarian Church; its history, its characteristic convictions, its achievements, its hopes. In preparing it, the author has had in mind the needs of inquirers who have come to him in the course of a fruitful ministry seeking the information which is here set down. Dr. Crooker has had the privilege of serving two churches situated at the seats of two great state universities,—the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. In these academic communities he has won the confidence and lasting affection of a large number of young men and women who have become and are to become influential members of the communities in which they live. He writes this statement out of this unique and happy experience.

The statement does not represent a narrow sectarian view or a boastful spirit. With all his fellow citizens in this free household of faith, Dr. Crooker recognizes that Unitarianism is not now, and probably never will be, the one universal religion. It is rather a particular form of the religious life. It is not so much a system of thought as it is a habit of mind and a principle of conduct. The

representative expression of this habit of mind is to be found in the constant witness borne to the present life of God in the present life of man. Every true Unitarian seeks to cultivate the religious spirit that includes all truth, and the religious sentiment that embraces all men. Therefore Dr. Crooker's aim has been to affirm the great spiritual ideals of the human soul. He has been more intent on winning the doubtful, relieving the distressed, and inspiring the indifferent in matters pertaining to religion, than on criticising creeds, or controverting outgrown dogmas. He has written in warm appreciation of all forms of sincere piety, and has endeavored to speak the truth in love.

The mission of Unitarian teaching and work is "not to destroy but to fulfil." Its purpose is not to antagonize other forms of faith, but to satisfy some of the longings which those other forms of faith express; to discover and emphasize the permanent and universal elements of religious thought and life, and lead such powers on to nobler employment. It preserves the historic continuity of the progressive spiritual life of the Christian centuries. What Dr. Crooker has written is heartily commended to all who wish to know something of the nature of the religious movement which seeks thus to re-affirm the religion of Jesus Christ, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

SAMUEL A. ELIOT.

The Unitarian Church:

ITS

HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

I. HISTORY

I THE Unitarian Gospel began with the discovery
Beginnings that we live in a *Universe*. Its original affirmation
was the unity of God. The great teachings of science respect-
ing the unity of energy, the unity of life, the unity of humanity,
are confirmations of that early conviction.

II The prophetic writings, such as those by Amos,
Hebrew Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, represent the spiritual
Prophets and enduring elements in the Old Testament. In
their protest against sacrifice, idolatry, formalism, injustice,
and selfishness, and in their teaching of the unity, holiness,
and goodness of God, they set forth what are now the essen-
tial Unitarian principles. Their plea that righteousness is what
God demands and what man needs, — that righteousness is
blessedness, — is our plea.

III We claim to teach what was central and essential
Jesus in the message of Jesus. We lay our emphasis on
the Beatitudes, the Golden Rule, the Law of Love (Matt.
xxii. 34-40). We find the way of salvation described in
his parables, where purity is set forth as the condition, growth
the method, love the motive, character the fruitage, and
service the expression of Eternal Life, or the kingdom of
heaven.

IV We do not appeal to the New Testament as a
Apostles document of final and infallible authority, and we
do not claim that the Unitarian Gospel is merely an echo

of apostolic Christianity. But we do claim to represent its spirit and ideal. When Peter declared, "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him," he proclaimed the Unitarian faith. When he described the ministry of Jesus to consist in "turning every one of you from his iniquities," he spoke like a Unitarian. See Acts iii. 26 ; x. 34, 35.

When Paul preached, "In God we live and move and have our being," and when he wrote, "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three ; and the greatest of these is love," he stood on ground now occupied by Unitarians. See Acts xvii. 28 ; 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

And when it was written by John or in the name of John, "Let us love one another, for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John iv. 7), the writer defined the Unitarian position. There are other things in the New Testament, but these teachings made the glory and strength of early Christianity, and they are the things that are eternal and that we lay to heart.

▼ In the primitive churches there were beliefs in **Early Church** respect to the messiahship and second coming of Jesus, superstitions respecting baptism, and uses of the Old Testament, which are no part of our religion. But it is generally conceded by modern scholars that the original Christianity was not the acceptance of a creed but the adoption of a spirit like that of Jesus, and that the early churches were democratic in form, each independent, with no elaborate ceremonials and no radical distinctions between clergy and laity.

Great scholars representing many different denominations agree to-day that the *deification* of Jesus, as found in the Nicene and trinitarian creeds, has no adequate warrant in Scripture, and does not represent the original faith, but that it was a slowly developed philosophical *afterthought*, which was

rooted, not in the words of Jesus or the beliefs of his disciples, but in the mystical speculations of Alexandria.

It is also admitted that the so-called "Apostles' Creed" does not accurately report the ideas of primitive Christianity. It was not set forth by the Apostles themselves, but was slowly evolved under the stress of many controversies, and reached its present shape after the fourth century.

No modern church exactly reproduces the original Christian faith, polity, or ritual (it is not necessary that they should be reproduced); but what we claim is, (1) That many of the dogmas made prominent in the creeds of Christendom have no warrant in the teachings of Jesus; (2) That the spiritual and eternal elements of primitive Christianity are affirmed by Unitarians. Confirmation of these statements may be easily found in the oldest church manual in existence, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" (distributed *free* in an English translation by the American Unitarian Association), or in the two works by the great Oxford scholar, Rev. Dr. Edwin Hatch (Episcopal), "Organization of the Early Christian Churches" and "Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages."

VI At the first general council at Nicæa in 325, Arius
Arians denied the doctrine that was finally adopted — the Nicene Creed (forced through by the imperial pressure of Constantine) — that Jesus, the Son or Logos, is "very God of very God" (same substance — *homoousion*), and he asserted that Jesus was a being more than man, but separate from God, of similar but not identical substance (*homoiousion*), not begotten from eternity but created in time. This Arian view of Jesus as a separate and subordinate being has been widely held by the forerunners of modern Unitarians. The fact that Arius could truthfully appeal to Scripture and tradition against his opponent Athanasius shows that a belief similar to this had been the ancient and common view.

The Arians were at times very numerous, and they were often active in good works. Witness the missionary labors of

Ulfilas among the Goths (died 383). But Arianism was not a successful solution of the problem respecting Jesus' nature and rank. It neither saved the pure humanity of Jesus nor brought mankind into immediate contact with the infinite God our Father, while it subjected the Arians to the charge of worshipping a *creature*, — an intolerable situation. Unitarians a century ago largely held Arian views; fifty years ago this position had been generally abandoned. It is now held by few, if any.

VII Many early Protestants approximated the Unitarian
Reformation position, and four great men among the reformers of the sixteenth century set in operation forces in the religious world that resulted in a liberal form of Christianity. In 1553 Servetus (a fugitive from Spain, his native land; burned at the stake in Geneva, 1553, Calvin consenting) published his "Restoration of Christianity," a plea for a simplification of the Christian faith. It was not a profound work, but it provoked discussion and stimulated more rational thinking. Faustus Socinus labored in the same general direction — a disciple of Lælius Socinus, his uncle (both Italians). He spread his views widely in Poland (1575–1604), where they flourished for about a century, but were finally stamped out with great cruelty. About 1560, Francis David established even more radical doctrines, in Transylvania, where the movement which he inaugurated still survives. His disciple, John Sigismund, gave the people a charter of religious liberty (1568) — one of the first and greatest documents of religious freedom.

The prominence of Lælius and Faustus Socinus in this movement for a more rational interpretation of Christianity gave the name *Socinian* to those who denied the absolute deity of Jesus and the total depravity of man, and affirmed the unity of God and a spiritual, rather than a sacrificial, interpretation of Jesus. The name, however, has long since ceased adequately to describe Unitarians.

Arius, Servetus, and Socinus had this in common, — they denied the dogma of the Trinity. But we must note these differences: Arius dealt only with the rank and nature of Jesus, making him an intermediate being between God and man. Servetus was a free lance, somewhat erratic and wholly critical. He made Jesus not so much a separate being as a peculiar manifestation of God. Socinus effected a more positive and comprehensive reconstruction of Christianity. He was more humanitarian in his view of Jesus than the others, looking upon him, not so much as a unique being, as a “divine man.” He also denied total depravity, vicarious atonement, and endless punishment.

VIII By 1600 these liberal views began to take hold of
England some thoughtful minds in England. Some English Liberals were, however, Arians rather than Socinians. But anything like a popular movement in this line was made impossible by cruel measures of repression. Unitarian literature was burnt, and denial of the Trinity was made punishable by death. In 1662, John Biddle died in prison from starvation under charge of teaching against the trinitarian doctrine. The last heretics to die as martyrs in Great Britain were Unitarians. Unitarians were not properly recognized by law in England until the year 1813, when the penalties attaching to disbelief in the Trinity were abolished. And yet, three of the greatest Englishmen of the seventeenth century were Unitarians of the Arian type — John Milton, Sir Isaac Newton, and John Locke.

During the eighteenth century, there was a broadening of religious thought among certain Presbyterian churches in England, — those whose chapels were held on “open trusts,” not tied to a fixed creed, like the Presbyterian churches in Scotland; and by the middle of the century some of them had come to be Unitarian in belief. Joseph Priestley (Socinian rather than Arian), the discoverer of oxygen, was minister of one of these churches in Birmingham (1780). His work on the “Corruptions of Christianity” (1782) exerted a

wide influence. In 1774, Rev. Theophilus Lindsey (formerly an Episcopal clergyman) established a Unitarian chapel in London (where the Unitarian Headquarters are now located — Essex Hall). To this nucleus slowly gravitated many of these Presbyterian and other progressive churches.

The movement now had a centre and a name. The British and Foreign Unitarian Association was organized in 1825. In connection with this movement during the past century, small in numbers and cramped by many forms of intolerance and persecution, we find the names of such hymn writers as Sir John Bowring ("In the Cross of Christ I Glory") and Sarah Flower Adams ("Nearer, my God, to Thee"); such leaders among women as Frances Power Cobbe, Florence Nightingale, Mary Somerville, and Mary Carpenter; such scientists and scholars as Sir Charles Lyell, Dr. William B. Carpenter, Francis W. Newman, Samuel Davidson, Stopford A. Brooke, and James Martineau, — a group of immortals out of all proportion to the size of this religious body!

IX The seeds of Unitarianism were brought over to
America America in the Mayflower. They were planted wherever a church was organized in New England with a *covenant* instead of a *creed*. The successive steps of growth are indicated by the following names and dates:

In 1715 Rev. John Wise, of Ipswich, Mass., the father of American Democracy, published a powerful and popular book, "Government of the New England Churches," which was a stirring plea for democracy, progress, and reason in religion. It insisted on the absolute independence of the local church, — a pure Congregational Polity, in contrast with Presbyterian and Episcopal hierarchies. It effectually kept the door open for growth and progress. This made it possible for Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Gay, ordained pastor of the First Parish in Hingham, Mass., 1717, to advance to a Liberal Theology a few years later and still keep his pulpit. Others advanced along the same line.

About 1740 Rev. Dr. Charles Chauncy, minister of the First Church, Boston, led the broadening religious thought of the time in a work, "Seasonable Thoughts," directed against Jonathan Edwards and the revivals of the day. Later (1784) he published a notable book, "Salvation of All Men," one of the most forcible affirmations of the "Largest Hope" ever printed.

Soon after the close of the Revolution many ministers of the old First Parishes (Congregational churches) in Eastern Massachusetts had come by quiet growth to occupy Unitarian ground. They had abandoned the Trinity for the Fatherhood of God, total depravity for the native capacity of man, the teaching of dogma for emphasis on righteousness, the deity of Christ for the divinity of Jesus; and, using the Bible more rationally and spiritually, they rescued the humanity of Jesus from neglect, interpreted religion as the spirit of a noble life, and advocated freedom and growth. Unitarianism was now *in the air*, partly as the result of the liberal thought imported from England and France, partly as the product of the culture of Harvard College, but chiefly as the natural outcome of the principles inherent in New England Puritanism.

The first overt act was, however, the ordination of James Freeman, a decided Unitarian, as rector of King's Chapel, Boston (1787), — the first Episcopal church established in New England. The ritual of the church was modified by the excision of Orthodox phrases and the parish became Congregational or independent. In 1796, in Philadelphia, under the influence of Priestley, who had fled to America to escape violent persecution, a distinctly Unitarian church was established. When Henry Ware, known to be a decided Liberal, was appointed (1805) professor of divinity at Harvard, the separation among the New England churches and ministers began in earnest. Two parties, Orthodox and Unitarian, were soon arrayed against each other in the theological debate. In the score of years following, nearly all the old churches in Boston and many of the First Parishes in that vicinity became Unitarian in

theology, but without changing their name or organization ; and they remain to this day the leaders in all Unitarian activities. During these years a great teacher came forth, Rev. Dr. William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), minister of the Federal Street Church (now Arlington Street), Boston ; and his sermon at Baltimore in 1819, at the ordination of Jared Sparks, became the Unitarian Declaration of Independence. In 1825 followed at Boston the organization of the American Unitarian Association.

x At the present date there are in America about
Present four hundred and fifty Unitarian churches, a major-
Unitarian ity being east of the Hudson river, and many of
Churches these latter being the original churches of the early settlers, like those at Plymouth, Salem, Boston, Watertown, and Cambridge. In Great Britain and Ireland there are about four hundred churches in the Unitarian fellowship, with various names — Presbyterian, Free Christian, General Baptist, Non-subscribing as well as Unitarian. In Transylvania, with Kolozsvár as a centre, there are some one hundred and twenty-five Unitarian congregations.

xi There are many religious bodies in general sym-
Similar pathy with the Unitarians who do not take our
Movements name. The Universalist churches in America are almost identical with the Unitarian in religious position and theological teaching. The Hicksite Quakers and Progressive Friends, carrying out the spirit of William Penn (who forcibly opposed trinitarian and dogmatic Christianity in "Sandy Foundation Shaken," 1668) are in general harmony with the best Unitarian thought. The Liberal Protestants in France and Switzerland have practically the same beliefs. In Germany there are many Liberals among Lutherans and Evangelicals, associated in the *Protestanten Verein*, who are in general agreement with Unitarian views. The progressive movement among the Jews, Reformed Judaism, is in substantial accord with the Unitarian spirit. There is a large and influential party in Holland, with the University of Leiden as its centre

of culture, which is Unitarian in everything but name. The Brahma Somaj of India, a noble band of Theists who represent the advance guard of religious progress in that land, are in closest fellowship with English and American Unitarians.

XII
Friends
Without
the Camp

It would be easy to make a long list of eminent men and women from all parts of the world who have shown great appreciation of the Unitarian movement or who have occupied a similar position.

Dean Stanley, of Westminster, wrote some twenty years ago: "The Unitarian church, including within itself almost all the cultured scholarship of America in the beginning of this century, was unquestionably at the summit of the civilized Christianity of the western continent."

The great Spanish reformer and statesman, Castelar, made this declaration: "The simple religion of the future will be a religion whose dogmas are summed up in the two fundamental ones of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, completed by the purest morality, which breathes forth a disinterested love of goodness for its own sake," — precisely the spirit and ideal of Unitarians.

Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, used these words to Professor Kovacs, his fellow-countryman, a Unitarian: "I rejoice over your connection with the English and American Unitarians. Spread their ideas and faith as widely as you can in Hungary. Their faith is the only faith which has a future; the only one that can influence the intelligent and interest the indifferent."

Prof. David Swing represented a large multitude who have never taken our name but who share our general views of religion and life. His own words were just what are preached from every Unitarian pulpit: "From such a dark estimate of God and Christ as this old notion [of Calvinism] involves, it is sweet to return to the thought that the law of salvation by morality is not a lottery, but, like the law of industry, it lies open for all."

The interpretations of life and religion set forth in the great works of fiction by George Eliot and Mrs. Humphry Ward — the greatest novelists among women — are essentially Unitarian. Both of these distinguished authors have been very closely associated with the Unitarians. Many eminent clergymen in Scotland, nominally Presbyterian, practically occupy our ground, — such men as Rev. Dr. George Macdonald in his stories, Rev. Dr. Robert H. Story in his sermons, and Rev. Dr. Walter C. Smith in his poems. Two of the greatest literary influences during the last century among English-speaking peoples were Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold; and both, while they cannot be called Unitarians, were, in the essence of their messages, really pleading for the things central in our Gospel. Three of the men who, in various ways, have most adorned and enriched the life of the Orient in recent years have been our approving friends, — Ram Mohun Roy, founder of the Brahmo Somaj, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, the celebrated Parsee philanthropist, and Yukichi Fukuzawa, “the grand old man” of Japan.

The four men, all profoundly religious, who were the greatest interpreters of human life among our poets during the nineteenth century were in general harmony with our spiritual ideals, — in fact, their words have contributed to the making of modern Unitarianism, — Goethe and Victor Hugo, Browning and Tennyson. We would not try to narrow these great geniuses to any sectarian position; but we do claim that the great essentials in their messages are the things that we emphasize.

Count Tolstoi, the greatest living literary genius at the present time, has recently given expression to the following views: “It is true I deny an incomprehensible Trinity and the fable regarding the fall of man, which is absurd in our day. It is true I deny the sacrilegious story of a god born of a virgin to redeem the human race. But God-Spirit, God-Love, God the sole principle of all things, I do not deny.

I believe in eternal life, and I believe that man is rewarded according to his deeds here and everywhere, now and forever. I believe that the will of God was never so clearly, so precisely explained as in the doctrine of the man Christ. But one cannot regard Christ as God, and offer prayers to him, without committing the greatest sacrilege." This is really a summary of the Unitarian faith.

II. CHARACTERISTICS

I. COVENANTS NOT CREEDS

UNITARIANS in America use as the basis of their churches a *covenant*, the declaration of a spiritual purpose, or a life promise. Their bond of union is not a creed,—a set of beliefs,—but a statement of religious motives. In this they follow the early Congregational Polity, or method of church organization, which was formulated by Robert Browne in England, late in the sixteenth century, adopted by the English Independents, brought over to this country by the Pilgrims, and used by the original churches in New England. The covenant of the Pilgrim church at Plymouth (adopted in 1602 before leaving England for Holland) is substantially as follows :

"We, the Lord's free people, join ourselves by a covenant of the Lord, into a church estate in the fellowship of the Gospel, to walk in all his ways, made known or to be made known unto us, according to our best endeavors."

That of the church in Salem, Massachusetts, the first Protestant church organized in America (1629), is similar : —

"We covenant with the Lord, and one with another, and we do bind ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in all his ways according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth."

Several very important facts are evident at a glance :
(1) Though these people were Calvinists, they did not make

their Calvinistic beliefs the basis of their church organization or the test of their Christian fellowship. (2) This is not a promise to believe alike, but a promise to help one another to live better; "to walk together," not to think alike, — a simple and spiritual *covenant*, not a *creed*; an aspiration of the soul, not a theological confession. (3) These men of sturdy faith *left the door open for progress*. The anticipation of growth, and the expectation of larger wisdom, speak in every phrase of these covenants. Here we find the guarantee of liberty and the pledge of growth.

In after years, dogmatic and reactionary leaders in many New England churches overlaid these covenants with elaborate creeds. But on the rise of Unitarianism, nearly a century ago, those creeds were abandoned by these liberal churches and emphasis was laid once more upon the original covenants. The Plymouth and Salem churches, and many others, which have long been Unitarian in thought and fellowship, still have their original organization with the first covenants unchanged.

It is interesting to note that two of the most significant events in religious affairs in America during recent years represent a movement in the same direction. The Old South Church (Trinitarian Congregational), Boston, has set aside its outgrown and dogmatic creed and substituted in its place a simple covenant. Even Andover Seminary, founded (1807) to oppose and demolish Unitarianism, no longer demands that its professors subscribe its drastic theological confession. It is satisfied with the mere declaration of a Christian purpose.

Unitarians ask no one to sign a creed, because they affirm that dogmas are neither central in religion nor essential to salvation; and also, because it is wrong to tie the mind to finalities when progress is the true law of life. They do not reject creeds because they believe so little. They believe so much that they do not attempt to define and confine their faith within narrow and rigid bounds. The use of a creed (though it may contain many elements of truth) injures reli-

gion by diverting attention from reverence and righteousness (the essence of piety) to mere opinions that are often remote from life. This creed-system enslaves reason and arrests growth. It fosters duplicity and insincerity by leading people to pretend to believe what they really reject; to use old phrases in a new sense, misrepresenting the past and disguising the fresh revelation. And it also injures religion by tempting people to quibble about words and wear masks when they ought to be frank and explicit and clear.

Unitarians have very strong convictions; but they strive to keep them vital and practical by fitting them continuously to the facts of life as they are discovered. A creed is too often a tombstone set up to mark the point where men stopped growing. Instead of making truth authoritative, it turns the religious teacher into an apologist. Truth is no paralytic that needs to walk on dogmatic crutches. As in science, so in religion, life means growth, and growth means larger views and nobler sentiments. Fixed moral principles and an expanding theology go hand in hand as friends. Unitarians oppose creeds, not alone because they are wholly or largely false, but because the method is inadequate and injurious.

A covenant that is coming into increasing favor among us is the following: "In the love of truth and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man." All earnest, reverent, loving men and women can stand on this platform; and no narrower basis is adequate. The church ought to include all who desire to be good and to do good. We as Unitarians insist on strong convictions and positive religious instruction, but all this can exist without the use of a formal dogmatic creed.

2. BELIEFS

IT must always be borne in mind that no answer to the question, "What do Unitarians believe?" can be an adequate description of the Unitarian Gospel. While we are great

believers, we insist that beliefs at best are only fractional, and often only secondary, elements of life; and we hold that religion is a life. We have beliefs that are very dear to us, convictions that are very powerful with us, but we stand for something larger and more vital than these beliefs and convictions.

Moreover, we hold that many theological beliefs, or speculations, are too remote from the motives and ideals of daily life to have any moral or spiritual value. We have aspirations, sentiments, and principles, that seem more important than our doctrinal theories. Certainly they are more important than the dogmas, like election and justification, which deal with metaphysical problems that are no more a part of vital piety than the atomic theory or the binomial theorem.

We can put no brief dogmatic statement into any person's hand and say: "If you believe this you are a Unitarian." Whether a man is a Unitarian is determined by a different measurement: "What is your life?" The briefest definition of a Unitarian is, "The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man applied." This language does not mean that we claim to be better than other people. We simply affirm that *the spirit of the life* is itself "religion." No particular belief about baptism or communion, the Bible, or even the rank of Jesus, by itself makes any one a Unitarian.

A description of the Unitarian religion deals only incidentally with speculative doctrines; and it deals with them chiefly to show that they are relatively unimportant. We go deeper into life and ask, "What are your affections and aspirations, your motives and ideals?" Here is the real religion. We need more clear thinking in religion as everywhere else; but it ought to be first of all clear thinking about the practical problems of the religious life.

Our chief aim, therefore, is not so much to impose opinions as to cultivate the spirit of a true life, to develop and enrich character and to lead people into helpful services. We do

not assume that our theories or motives are perfect ; but we feel that they include enough truth and nobility to save those who faithfully put them into practice. All that we can ask is that every one shall live according to his best conviction ; this is the demand of God upon all. And we most heartily grant that those who differ with us possess large elements of precious truth, — sufficient for their need if they are loyal to it.

Among Unitarians, differences of belief cause no bitterness and occasion no censure. But just because we are so free to handle the facts of life, nearly all of us reach nearly the same conclusions. There is among us that general agreement on essentials that is found in the realms of science. It is, however, a unity in diversity rather than a formal uniformity of opinion. And as among scientists, so with us, those who differ with us are not “heretics,” but beloved fellow-workers, whom we are to instruct or from whom we are to learn. In view of these facts, no one can make an “authoritative” statement of Unitarian affirmations that must be accepted as final and essential. We can only describe the religious convictions commonly held among us at the present time.

3. A PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

It is well to remember that Unitarians constitute a progressive movement of religious thought and life. There is movement in all religious dispensations, even those most enslaved by tradition or most bound by creeds. Where there is life there must be change. There is progress among Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Catholics. But just at this point, there is a radical difference between us and many other churches. The changes which others resist, we welcome. The progress which they reluctantly accept, we most gladly foster.

Protestants in general assert and enforce a creed which is presented as a final statement of truth that one must believe to be saved. We put our emphasis on a method of discovery, being always on the lookout for larger and clearer views of

truth and duty. What seems essential to us is not any transient form of opinion, but the method of truth-finding by which progress is made continuous; and what seems supreme to us is not any particular mode of service, but the sentiment of love which constantly creates more fruitful services. Conservatives defend the faith once delivered to the saints. In the conviction that God now abounds, and that his oracles are still open, we reverently watch the present heavens and earnestly listen to living voices for the revelation of a still more glorious gospel.

Dogmatists decry innovations and stand guard on the ancient walls built around the sanctities of piety by a Luther, a Calvin, or a Wesley. But Unitarians, discarding the rusty armor and leaving behind crumbling traditions, keep in the open field and on the march, feeling that no one is so safe or so strong as he who is in the pursuit of truth; and feeling, also, that wherever men may tent that spot will be the abode of the living God! We move forever onward, not because we lack appreciation of past worthies and olden symbols, not because we are disturbed by doubt and distracted by uncertainty, but because we have confidence in the unfolding process, as a divine process, and, also, because we have confidence in the leadership of love and truth, under which we march. Therefore we cease to be Unitarians when we cease to grow!

4. MORE THAN NEGATION

THE Unitarian movement is something more than a protest against the creeds of Christendom. If we destroy the old house of worship, it is to build on firmer foundations a grander temple. If we criticise a long cherished belief, it is to create one more in harmony with the truth of things and more productive of personal righteousness. We deny the less that we may affirm the greater. When Luther laid down the heavy load of mediæval superstitions he had more power than he possessed before; he possessed himself, with freedom to use

his strength in more fruitful fashion. The lad who goes away to school loses the petty notions of his neighborhood, but he gains the light and glory of a broad horizon.

Our affirmations of religious truth may seem very harmful to piety when first heard by many people, because apparently destructive to their long-cherished opinions. But let it be remembered that it is impossible to preach salvation by character without sweeping aside the theory of sacrificial atonement. To proclaim that God is a divine Father to all his children is a larger and more positive view of Providence than the theory of Calvin; and yet, it is absolutely destructive of Calvinism.

It is sometimes carelessly said that we believe little and that our teaching is negative. We do reject many things long considered necessary to salvation, but we do this because we really believe vastly more than our fathers did. We are not living in the eclipse but at the dawn of rational faith. We believe so absolutely in God as goodness that we claim that more than a small fraction of mankind will be saved. We believe so profoundly in the moral law that we hold that only holiness is blessedness. We believe so mightily in the sincerity of Providence that we teach that it is a thousandfold better to bear our own cross than to hide behind the cross of Jesus. We believe so fully in human nature that we assert that it was capable of producing Jesus of Nazareth.

We are not Unitarians because we reject the dogma of the Trinity; we are Unitarians because we have put ourselves under the command of reason and have accepted the modern discoveries of the unity in things and souls. Our disbelief in the trinitarian formula is merely incidental to our sublimely positive convictions respecting God and man. It is what we have discovered about the universe that discredits the Nicene creed. We have therefore put aside this formula, not because it is wholly false and not because we have lost our faith in the Almighty, but because the old words do not adequately describe our thought of the immanent God.

We are not Unitarians because we deny the deity of Jesus ; we are Unitarians because we believe in the unity of history and the divinity of human nature ; and these larger and more positive views of Providence compel us to think of Jesus as infinitely grander and more helpful than a mystical " God-Man."

We are not Unitarians because we set aside the theory of Scriptural infallibility ; we are Unitarians because we trace the revelation of truth and the incarnation of divinity so widely throughout the evolution of humanity that we are able to affirm the universal Fatherhood of God, and having reached this mount of vision, every dogma that denies the immanence of God in all souls seems a profanation, and every creed that implies finality in a text seems a rejection of the living God. We do not reject the Bible ; we only reject those irrational uses of the Bible that seem to us to banish God from the present world.

UNITARIAN PRINCIPLES

I THE position most peculiar and fundamental to
Human Unitarians is the view of man himself. We build
Nature our religious ideals, methods, and hopes on the
demonstrable facts of human nature. We begin with facts of human experience and find in them the revelation of a way of life and the demonstration of a divine Fatherhood. We go to the naturalist and accept what he has discovered respecting the origin of man. We go to the psychologist for instruction upon the nature of the soul, — the evolution of conscience, the scope of imagination, the power of sentiment, the authority of reason. We go to the historian and learn what humanity has achieved, tracing the onward sweep of civilization, with law, literature, art, government, commerce, science, and religion. We go to the educator and discover how intellect and heart are trained and unfolded. We go to the philanthropist and watch the creative methods by which defectives and criminals

are improved and reformed. We go to the student of comparative religion, and listen while he reads from out all the Bibles of the race noble commands for purity, sweet messages of hope, and tender prayers of trust. We listen also as he describes rites and symbols by which the spirit of man has pictured and cultivated the feeling of reverence and the passion for holiness.

We gather all these facts from the widest circle of experience, and in the light of these truths we affirm that man is a spiritual being, the outcome of nature's highest creative impulse. A being, imperfect but progressive, with native capacity for the discovery of truth, for moral development, for religious feeling, and for the outgrowth of sin.

We accept this truth respecting human nature as the basis and starting point, of our religious doctrines and methods. Man has been very imperfect, but he has stumbled on through ignorance and waywardness, sorrow and superstition to higher civilization and nobler character. There is in him more good than evil, otherwise his creation would be a horrible blunder, impeaching the wisdom and goodness of Providence. We discover that there is an essential unity in languages, customs, and institutions, because human nature is everywhere essentially the same. There is no real division of history into natural and supernatural.

To all men, some truth has been divinely revealed; to no man has absolute truth been miraculously imparted. Everywhere men have loved, found, and incarnated in character and civilization some measure of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Sin everywhere and always brings pains and penalties; but sinners from the first have repented and reformed, for the way out of sin has everywhere been open to all, and in all ages it has been the same, the turning of the penitent heart through divine disciplines to its better estate in purity and peace. Saints, too, have arisen among all peoples because the soul has an inherent capacity for righteousness.

Wherever we find man, there we find a religious effort commensurate with his intelligence and conscience. Man has a native impulse toward discovery, for his reason impels him to ask questions and find causes. He has a native sense of justice that reports and enforces the moral law; and this ethical power enables him to turn from sin and live in purity and integrity. He has a native capacity for worship, and wherever he goes he builds an altar, at which he worships a divine ideal. From crude idolater to most spiritual theist, the soul feels after and finds somewhat of the common Father.

II
Thought
of God

From this thought of man, we pass on to our thought of God. Our knowledge of man makes our conception of God clear and certain, however incomplete. Because we have discovered the soul, we must believe in God. The finite divinity resident in man reveals an infinite divinity in a Fatherhood from which it flows. Because we have an intelligence that discovers an intelligible order in the universe, we are compelled to affirm an infinite cause that is intelligent. This is the only way by which we can account for ourselves. That parental life which reports itself in us must be akin to that which is highest in ourselves. The conscience within us which reveals and commands moral law, by uncovering what is inherent in the universe and taking its authority from the Immanent Life, constrains us to affirm that the Power in which we live is moral. For, if otherwise, how could we have a conscience? How have a moral sentiment, unless there is a moral life abroad in nature upon which it can feed? As the eye proves the existence of light, so conscience implies the presence of righteousness in the cosmos, of which we are a part.

The love which overflows in our souls must take its rise from the mountain heights of Infinite Being outside ourselves. It could not move my breast with such awful and mysterious power, were there not behind it the pressure of the universe. It could not so fill and possess me were

it not a constituent of that Universal Life, in which my life is rooted !

Therefore, it is when we take our stand within the soul itself, and survey its sublime and varied elements, — its capacity to discover truth, revealing the nature of the distant star and laying bare the creative processes at work in the flower ; its ability to uncover moral law and also furnish motive power for hero and saint ; its marvellous creations of ideal, affection, and aspiration ; its sense of an Encompassing Divineness which pours itself out in a myriad forms of worship, — it is from these spiritual facts of our own nature that we rise irresistibly to the thought of a Fatherhood, from whom all this springs and by whom it is fostered !

Unitarians reach their belief in God by way of the soul. These essential factors, — thought, conscience, love — could not be in our life unless in the Universal Life. What is in the dewdrop is in the ocean. And when we survey human history, and see how the thought of God has dominated the mind of man, we must conclude that there is an Infinite Reality in the universe of which this thought is the report. It is unreasonable to suppose that such a persistent and prominent conviction should have no cause in the nature of things. This belief in God is given in the experience of life. It is forced upon us by the universe itself. We must accept it as grounded in reality, or admit that the universe is a deceptive phantom and our faculties false reporters. But science assumes that our reason is a faithful, if imperfect, discoverer of realities. If it were not so, there could be no science.

As, therefore, the pressure of the real universe constrains man to say “God,” we must accept the report as true in essence however imperfect in form. And just because science traces everywhere in nature a rational order that implies intelligence and in history a moral order that implies a righteous Providence, we affirm an ideal of God that is best described by the one great word — “Fatherhood.”

The thought of God is a commanding necessity of our moral and intellectual life. We cannot free ourselves from it. It is implied in the processes of thinking. We may deny the truth of this or that teaching respecting the Infinite, but somewhere in our interpretation of the universe this Reality will emerge under some name ; somewhere in our explanation of life will the parental Verity be assumed. It is a thought in constant flux ; for life itself, to whose varying limits it is evermore fitted is an evolution. But while variable in form, it is perpetually present in some form, sometimes wearing a human disguise and sometimes under cover of negation itself. For often we outgrow our real atheism by leaving behind ancient ideals of deity.

The necessity is not so much, however, that we say "God," as that we make the word mean something worthy Him whom it symbolizes and spiritually helpful to him who uses it. It is a sublimely inspiring word if it is made to comprehend the sublimity of truth and the inspiration of love. But we may lift up reverent hands in the elaborate worship of a vast temple, and yet be near the verge of atheism if we limit the family of God to those who worship in that place. What we need as a tonic atmosphere, in which to grow more divinely strong and beautiful, is a thought of God rooted in a trust deeper than texts, speaking in prayers that are more than petty petitions, creating a reverence commensurate with truth and goodness, inspiring a fellowship which embraces all that is human, and perfecting the hope of a heaven that is more than escape from penalty.

The richest fruitage of the spirit is a thought of God that links itself with all that is beautiful in nature ; that embraces all souls in its providential ministries ; that finds revelation wherever truth is discovered, and divine service wherever truth is lived ; and this thought of God, in the fulness of love and sympathy, casts out the atheism latent in every form of inhumanity.

III
Revelation
and the
Bible

If man is what science defines him to be, and if the thought of God is given in human experience as described, then we must understand by "revelation" a process as natural as human life and as large as human history. All discovery of truth is a revelation of God and all progress of mankind is incarnation of God. And while some writings become Scripture because of the precious truths which they contain, they are neither supernatural nor infallible.

We accept and honor the Bible as the best of many similar Scriptures, but all were produced by the same causes and under the same laws. It is the most valuable religious literature in existence, worthy our constant and reverent study. But it must be read for increase of life. Its texts must be handled by the free reason, not to formulate a creed but to enrich character. It has no monopoly of truth.

The Bible contains some errors and many noble truths; numerous legends and much inspiring history. No statement is true simply because it is in the Bible, while all its teachings must be tested by experience and subjected to the authority of reason and conscience.

Revelation is a process that overflows texts, antedates Bibles, and outlives creeds. It lies back of all litanies; it lights up all symbols; it clothes the prophet with power; it gives authority to institutions. In this larger view, we lose the Bible as a lumber room for dogma, but we enter it by the new gateway of reason and find it a rich pasture-land for the free soul. We escape from it as a prison, to come back to it as a wonderful treasure house of spiritual things. We cease to use them to club doubt and bind inquiry, but we learn diviner uses: we pile its texts on the altar fires of the heart to create heavenly motives.

We must have a theory of the Bible which includes all the facts, and a use of the Bible subject to reason and conscience. The Protestant creed-makers did the best they could; but

with only one Sacred Book before them and only a very limited knowledge of religious history, their opinions respecting revelation and the Bible were necessarily as imperfect as a theory of botany based upon the study of one tree. Science demands that we study all trees and all Scriptures and make our theories fit all the facts. We need not despise the creed-makers; we must not neglect the facts. We may honor the old scholar, while laying away his imperfect notion in the museum of antiquities, along with the stone axe. Any theory is injurious to both the Bible and humanity which claims for the Bible more than it claims for itself, and it nowhere lays claim to infallibility; and any theory of revelation is inadequate which neglects the facts of universal religion; while all uses of texts are harmful except those that make the soul alive to the presence of God and the hand active in helpfulness.

The Unitarian freely accepts all the assured discoveries of Biblical science and gladly adjusts his religious uses of the Bible to these facts, being perfectly confident that all this new truth will abundantly enrich piety.

IV Reason has been the discoverer and revealer from
Authority the beginning, as love has been the master motive
of Reason power; and these are progressive elements of an ever-unfolding human nature. Reason cannot explain all mysteries, but it must be free to investigate them. It does not create religion, but it must be used to guide religious sentiment. It does not destroy piety, but only that which is false in the forms of piety. Unitarians demand the right to reason freely in religion, and they grant all others the same privilege. They strive to have, as far as possible, a perfectly rational religion; and they use reason and conscience as the supreme authorities in religious matters.

The authority of tradition and text, of apostle and council, is simply the authority of some other man. It is worthy of respectful consideration, but it should never be put between

us and the living God. The assumption that the Apostles exercised final authority respecting beliefs and ceremonies is neither historically true nor spiritually helpful.

V If man is what we discover him to be, Jesus may
Jesus be explained as the ripened product of human nature without dishonor to him and with clearer appreciation of mankind in general. If we follow the first three and most reliable Gospels, we must believe in the humanity of Jesus. If God is what reason and nature reveal him to be, the assertion that Jesus was God is unthinkable.

The whole world is becoming more and more appreciative of the wonderful excellence and transcendent nobility of Jesus of Nazareth; but the modern mind and the modern heart are beginning to see and feel that the mysticism of the church which has centred in him and which has grown up about him is in many instances a most unfortunate denial of both the Fatherhood of God and the sonship of man as taught by Jesus himself and as reinforced by modern discovery.

An atheistic limitation has vitiated dogmatic theology from the first, — an unwillingness to leave Jesus in the sphere of humanity as illustration and evidence of the divine in the human. But just here, and only here, is still his providential office, — not to stand outside the race as a unique and mystical being, mediating between heaven and earth, but to stand within the race as the Witness of God in man by nature, in this way revealing the possibility that is ours, and also helping us to its realization in saintly character. Jesus has been thrust between the soul and God by the theologians as a supernatural agent in touch with only a fraction of mankind; but if he is to perform any continuing spiritual service for us, it must be by helping us through his example and the inspiration of his spirit to commune with God our Father through a daily life that is loving and lovable.

The traditional interpretation which insists that all of God walked forth on earth in Jesus, and that he is the only son of

God, is a most unfortunate limitation of God. It is the negation rather than the revelation of Fatherhood. The "only" son of God? Is Providence, then, a fiction, and the "Our Father" of the immortal prayer an impertinence? The "only" son of God? Is there, then, only one point at which divinity and humanity meet and flow together? This sweeps away the fundamental postulate of science that the Infinite Power is everywhere directly and perpetually resident.

The modern world, in its practical work, assumes an immediate association of human and divine. The educator has found a more adequate thought of God than that which limits sonship to Jesus; for when he penetrates any mind and makes, Godward, a demand for more life, it comes immediately from the fulness of Infinite Life. The educational method, everywhere supreme to-day, lays emphasis, not on the *propitiation*, but the *appropriation*, of God!

There is something infinitely more important than the acceptance of God *in Christ*: it is to honor, love, obey, and serve the divine Life everywhere present in human nature. The "only" son of God? How the achievements of the philanthropist, who actually unfolds the latent divineness of human nature without resorting to Galilee, rebuke this dogmatism that forgets God! Instead of teaching that all of God walked forth in Jesus and nowhere else, let us rather affirm that somewhat of God abides wherever man resides. Let us make some better use of Jesus than to construe his life so as to shut out divinity from the human soul and outlaw as aliens all who have not known him.

Just here is the serious defect of much of the popular religious teaching of the present day. "The Christ," as a mystical being, is thrust in between the finite soul and the infinite Spirit. The fellowship of human and divine is broken asunder, man is left without adequate parentage, and God is denied immediate access to man. There is a failure of faith to find inherent divineness in human nature, to admit revela-

tion in all discovery of truth, to see a real Providence in all history, and to appreciate the incarnation as a fact coextensive with goodness.

The old mystical assertions respecting Jesus are offensive to the scientific mind and the humane heart, not because love of Jesus is lacking, but because the love of truth and humanity is greater. We crave a God who is at home in India as well as Judea ; who is present with the same love in Moslem as in Catholic ; who is as near to the repentant heart in Africa as in America. Every faith lapses into practical atheism when it becomes selfish, exclusive, and partial. Where, indeed, does God operate if not in all souls ? How does man exist at all if not through heavenly tides of life sweeping every moment into receptive hearts ? By what power did the Parthenon rise, Buddha heal human sorrows, and Socrates triumph in death, if not by authority of him who shepherds every soul ?

As Unitarians, we love Jesus because he was lovable. We believe in him because he so faithfully lived the sublime truths of the moral law which he taught. We follow him because he revealed the true way of life ; and having realized in his own character what is possible for us, he inspires us to live like him and educatès us mightily in righteousness.

But with all our love and reverence for Jesus, we would not assert that he alone is our teacher, or that he represents the only type of life worthy honor and emulation. We cannot do without him ; but we must not ignore the many saints and heroes who also reveal God to us and who ought to serve as guides and examples. As we need all the stars, so let us love all the mighty sons of God. Jesus does indeed reveal the love of God to us. But he is not alone in this. Does not the mother's love also reveal God's love ?

Unitarians shun all dogmatism respecting the rank and office of Jesus, holding that the chief thing is to cultivate the spirit of his life. He ministers unto us most when he moves us to divine service. When we try to think of him as a part of

a mystical Trinity, he vanishes from us. To represent him as propitiating God is to deny his gospel. To assert that we can enter heaven only on his merits is to dethrone the doctrine of the divine Fatherhood which he preached. To do this is, indeed, to overthrow the moral law itself and also to miss the grand lesson of his life. We affirm that Jesus helps to save us only as he inspires us to fulfil the royal law of love in our daily lives.

vī

Humanity of
Jesus

It is astonishing and encouraging to note the rapid progress, during the last few years, of the world of religious scholarship toward the humanitarian view of Jesus, long maintained by Unitarians. What was once damnable heresy now walks abroad as most respectable Orthodoxy. A great "book of testimonies" could be made similar to the following statements, which reveal this remarkable advance. And this advance does not represent less but more faith in God, not less but more love for Jesus. The lives of the men holding these humanitarian views respecting Jesus prove, by their increased spirituality and enthusiasm for religion, that there is nothing harmful to piety in them. It is not pretended that these men are Unitarians in all respects. Their words are quoted to show how rapid and general the movement of thought in this direction really is.

It was not upon his deity nor yet upon the perfection of his humanity, that his [Jesus'] disciples founded the Christian church. The men whom he gathered about him regarded him in neither of these aspects. They thought of him only as the Messiah. . . . He is not represented [in Acts] as a pre-existent, heavenly being, but simply as a man approved of God and chosen by him to be the Messiah and then raised by him to the position of Lord. Of the Pauline conception that he had returned to the glory which was originally his [as a being subordinate to God], we have no hint in these early records.

"Apostolic Age" (1897), pp. 31, 55. By Prof. ARTHUR C. MCGIFFERT, Union Theological Seminary, New York.

Since Jesus prayed, we must believe that he felt a *need* of prayer. He offered sincere thanks and sincere supplications for

the Father's help. He looked away from himself as one consciously dependent. He subordinated his will to a higher will (Mark xiv. 36). He secured inward quietness and strength by casting himself upon the will of God. Now in all these situations Jesus comes before us as a true man. There is the same creaturely dependence that we find in ourselves. Jesus did not have one kind of prayer for himself and another kind for his disciples. As he approached God with the name *Father*, so he taught his disciples to do. The prayers of Jesus can all be prayed by his followers, as far as their circumstances correspond with his. There is nothing in them that suggests a consciousness other than that of an ideal man.

"Revelation of Jesus" (1899), p. 169. By Prof. GEORGE H. GILBERT, Chicago Theological Seminary.

Read all the books of Christian devotion from the earliest to the latest, and you will find that what they dwell upon, when they are not merely repeating the words of the creeds but speaking in the language of religious experience, is that Christ is divine, *just because* he is the most human of men, the man in whom the universal spirit of humanity has found its fullest expression; and that, on the other hand, he is the ideal or typical man, the Son of Man who reveals what is in humanity, *just because* he is the purest revelation of God in man. . . . In truth, the attempts of theology to raise Christ above the conditions of human life, and to give him a metaphysical or physical greatness of another kind, really end in lowering him and depriving him of his true position in the religious life of man.

"Evolution of Religion" (1893), vol. ii. p. 233. By Prof. EDWARD CAIRD, Oxford University.

Another signal example of the ethical development of doctrine is found in conceptions of the person of Christ. The change has amounted to a recovery of his humanity. Until recently, the Christians of America and England, with the exception of the Unitarians, believed that Jesus possessed and exercised all the attributes of God. . . . But now, although there are many who retain the old view, the theologians, thinkers, and scholars of the church believe that Christ was under the actual limitations of human nature. In knowledge he was not omniscient. He gained information as other men did. He shared the opinions of his time as to the universe, and in other essential respects was truly

human. He had wonderful insight, but he did not have omniscience.

“Moral Evolution” (1896), p. 403. By Prof. GEORGE HARRIS, President of Amherst College. Formerly professor at Andover Theological Seminary.

The whole christology of the Fourth Gospel is radically different from that of the Synoptics, and indicates a long process of evolution. As we have seen, the Synoptic Gospels hold the view of Christ’s Messianic character. He is the promised anointed one of David’s royal line. There is no hint [in the first three Gospels] of a superhuman pre-existence, or of a Logos doctrine. . . . His [Jesus’] doctrine of God’s attitude to man was that of a Father ready to forgive every penitent, not that of an offended Being who demanded a ransom in the way of a bloody sacrifice. Such a view of God is repugnant to him. The later doctrine of a mediator who comes between two parties that are estranged in order to reconcile them by the shedding of his blood seems never to have occurred to him.

“Evolution of Trinitarianism” (1900), pp. 291, 342. By Prof. LEVI L. PAINE, Bangor Theological Seminary.

A short time before his death, Prof. Max Müller, of Oxford University, published this statement: “What for us can there be higher than a man? Angels we have never seen, nor anything higher than man. That is what Christ himself has taught us; he calls us his brothers and the sons of the same Father. What can be higher? He does not claim for himself a nature different from ours. Take his own account of himself, ‘I go to my Father and your Father.’ We must not make him contradict himself.”

In the “Encyclopædia Biblica” (vol. ii. 1901) there is a remarkable article on “Jesus” by the late Rev. Dr. A. B. Bruce, of the Free Church College, Glasgow, an eminent and conservative Scotch Presbyterian clergyman. The whole article is very broad, though somewhat timid and indistinct. This paragraph will show its modern spirit:

The words of Jesus concerning the future show limitation of vision. In other directions we may discover indications that he was the child of his time and people. But his spiritual intuitions

are pure truth, valid for all ages. God, man, and the moral ideal cannot be more truly or happily conceived. Far from having outgrown his thoughts on these themes, we are only beginning to perceive their true significance. How long it will be before full effect shall be given to his radical doctrine of the dignity of man!

This great work, the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, is itself a most promising sign of religious progress. Its leading editor, Rev. Dr. Thomas K. Cheyne, is a clergyman of the Church of England and a distinguished professor at Oxford. Its contributors are eminent divines or University professors. But the articles all represent advanced scholarship; some, like the longest and most notable on the *Gospels*, are extremely radical, more radical than the positions of many Unitarians. A rational interpretation of religion, including the humanity of Jesus, is everywhere implied or expressed.

Prof. Adolph Harnack of the University of Berlin, who stands at the head of the scholars of the world in the department of church history, is a conservative student and a profoundly religious man. His opinions, therefore, carry the very greatest weight. He unreservedly admits, in a recent work, the truth of the proposition for which Unitarians have long contended, namely, that the deification of Jesus has no warrant in Scripture or in fact, but was due to his association with the Logos philosophy of Alexandria. It was not an original part of Christianity, but a slow growth beginning in the second century. He writes:

The identification of the Logos [which had been thought of as an intermediate creative power or person between the Almighty and the Universe] with Christ was the determining factor in the fusion of Greek philosophy with the apostolic inheritance, and led the more thoughtful Greeks to accept the latter. Most of us regard this identification as inadmissible, because the way in which we conceive the world and ethics does not point to the existence of any logos at all!

Professor Harnack points out that the purpose of the Fourth Gospel (written at the beginning of the second century, but

not by the Apostle John) was to carry out the identification of Jesus with the Logos. Jesus was given a central place in a philosophy of creation, and this philosophy was provided with a personal realization or historical embodiment. This Gospel contains some noble thoughts and affords many true glimpses of Jesus, but his figure is more or less distorted by the mists of Greek mysticism; and the writing, as Harnack states, "cannot be taken as an historical authority in the ordinary meaning of the word." This assured conclusion of Biblical scholarship is of great benefit to religion in several ways: it frees us from mere speculations, which are now useless; it simplifies religious teaching; and it enables us to gain a clearer and truer view of Jesus.

The admiration of Professor Harnack for Jesus is unbounded, but it is admiration for a purely human character:

Jesus is certain that everything which he has and everything which he is to accomplish comes from this Father. He prays to him; he subjects himself to his will; he struggles hard to find out what it is and to fulfil it. Aim, strength, understanding, the issue, and the hard *must*, all come from the Father. This is what the Gospels say, and it cannot be turned or twisted. This feeling, praying, working, struggling, and suffering individual is a man who in the face of his God also associates himself with other men.

"What is Christianity?" (1901), pp. 126, 204.

Among the most significant "signs of promise" at present may be mentioned the admissions made in several of the books in the series of "New Testament Handbooks" now being issued under the editorship of Prof. Shailer Mathews, of the University of Chicago. Especially significant because these little treatises are designed for use largely by Sunday-school teachers, and we should naturally expect a cautious and conservative treatment of all these subjects.

For years, Unitarians have taught that the story of Jesus as given in the first three Gospels represents him as a real man in loving obedience to God with no claim to deity, that the Book

of Acts reports the belief of the original church as purely humanitarian, and that in the Fourth Gospel we have a theological discussion about Jesus which reflects a late and philosophical theory of his nature, with assertions of a divine rank which Jesus did not himself make. All these positions are now accepted by the writer of one of these books, as the following quotations will show :

“In fact, all the way through [the first three Gospels], the secret of our Lord’s life is his communion with God. But just here also is the perfection of his manhood.” Of the view of Jesus held by the first Christians at Jerusalem, even after his ascension, as described in Acts, it is stated : “In heaven as on earth he [Jesus] is commended, attested, exalted, empowered by God, but there is no hint of a more intimate relation. . . . The death of Jesus is not regarded by the early disciples as atoning or vicarious.” The admission is frank and complete that in the Fourth Gospel we have a mystical doctrine about Jesus, largely speculative and unhistorical : “The proof that the Logos of the Prologue [John i. 1-18] is the Alexandrian Logos is that the *word* is here hypostatized.”

“Biblical Theology of the New Testament” (1900), pp. 39, 53, 54, 183. By Prof. EZRA P. GOULD, Protestant Episcopal Divinity School, Philadelphia.

When it is admitted that theological mysticism rather than historical accuracy is foremost in the Fourth Gospel, the way is cleared for the humanity of Jesus and a more ethical use of his name. And it is just this admission that is clearly made in another work belonging to this series, the best book so far printed in the English language on the subject which it discusses. The language is this (referring to the Fourth Gospel) :

“The work as a whole [is] adapted to the author’s purpose of theological exposition and interpretation, in a manner wholly incompatible with the clear, historical recollection of an eyewitness. . . . The outline of the career of Jesus is sketched in a manner not merely out of harmony with the triple tradition [of the first three Gospels], but irreconcilable with the historical situation, and with the narrative itself.” In other words, the largely

unhistorical Christ of the Fourth Gospel must be surrendered and we must go back to the first three Gospels for the real Jesus. When this is done, the mystical God-Man vanishes and we find ourselves in the presence of a real man, who is vastly more lovable and helpful.

“Introduction to the New Testament” (1900), pp. 252, 260. By Prof. BENJAMIN W. BACON, Divinity School, Yale University.

VII
Minor Matters
Respecting
Jesus

We need give only brief attention to a few subjects: The stories of Jesus' *miraculous birth* are poetic legends similar to those that have grown up around many other great historic characters. They reflect and report the deep impression which he made and the noble spirit which he displayed in his life. Jesus was undoubtedly born at Nazareth, the child of lawful wedlock, Joseph being his real father, as Mary herself declared, Luke ii. 48.

It is needless to spend time in these days in discussing the accounts of wonders wrought by Jesus. They were not, to the people then living, what we call *miracles* (violations or suspensions of natural laws); for the scientific conception of nature as a reign of law did not then exist. Jesus probably had remarkable power over people sick in body and mind. From this nucleus of fact, the poetic tendency of the time, under the influence of Scripture (especially the so-called Messianic passages), produced these stories which bear the water-marks of the age in which they sprang up. As Jesus himself invented parables freely to convey his lessons, so his disciples wove these parables about him to symbolize and publish their beliefs in reference to him. This is the general conclusion which the religious teachers of our day are rapidly accepting. When this position shall be fully occupied, then the real Jesus will shine with brighter light and religion will work with greater power.

Jesus was in no strict sense the fulfilment of the so-called Messianic predictions of the Old Testament, which vary widely in character, while only a few relate to a personal Messiah. He was not the *Messiah* foretold or expected. He was

immeasurably greater, — a sublimely original character, rooted in Judaism but transcending Judaism.

The *crucifixion* of Jesus is the most pathetic and inspiring event in human history. It is the revelation of the divine capacity of human nature and the demonstration of Jesus' spiritual heroism. The cross is not the scene of a payment for our sins, but the evidence of what the soul can achieve; not a screen to hide our sins from God, but a source of inspiration helping us to outgrow our sins. The suffering of Jesus on the cross opens heaven to us only as it moves us to live the heavenly life, — to suffer ourselves that we may enrich the lives of others. The cross did not purchase God's love for us. That is a hateful and immoral doctrine.

There are insuperable obstacles in the way of believing in the *bodily resurrection* of Jesus. The first form of this belief was simply that Jesus was *risen from the dead* (not the "grave") and alive at God's right hand (Acts ii. 22-33, iii. 15, iv. 10). The *sepulchre* legends grew up later. The belief in the resurrection of Jesus did not create Christianity. The love of the disciples for Jesus — the motive and impulse of Christianity — produced by his loveliness, created this belief, which worked itself out along divergent lines from incidents and experiences now beyond our reach. These varying stories at the close of the Gospels, photographed at different stages of growth, cannot be harmonized. All effort to this end is labor wasted. This conclusion, toward which reverent scholarship at present tends, does not degrade Jesus or destroy Christianity. It enables us to be at the same time scientific and religious, to accept modern discovery and also to keep our love for Jesus.

We cannot for a moment admit that the *blood* of Jesus made God propitious, or that faith in it releases us instantly from the punishment of our sins. This seems to us an immoral and irrational materialism. We protest against the sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death. Jesus never intimated

that he must shed his blood to make God love humanity. When the early Christians alluded to his blood, they had his life in mind, for in that age "life" and "blood" were interchangeable terms. As Ignatius wrote (about 117): "Be ye renewed . . . in *love*, that is, the *blood* of Jesus Christ."

VIII

Jesus and Present Life

These and many other difficulties vanish as soon as we consider Jesus a purely human character.

The quotations just given, all point to this end. They multiply with geometrical ratio as the years pass. They illustrate the irresistible influence and authority of the facts themselves. Sooner or later all religious thinking has to be adjusted to reality. As soon as the facts in the Gospel records are held in the light of the scientific spirit, as soon as Jesus is put clearly on the stage of real history, and as soon as the laws of human nature are applied to this subject, only one conclusion is possible — the humanity of Jesus.

This is a result to be welcomed rather than resisted, especially by the friends of Jesus and the champions of Christianity. The scientist, to hold to Jesus at all, must fit him to the real universe of law and order. The historian, to keep his faith in human evolution, must recognize in Jesus a natural product of human and historical forces. The philanthropist, to find the largest helpfulness in Jesus as he tells his story to sinner and sufferer, must set him forth as one who reveals the promise and possibility of the human soul. Therefore, if religion is to command the attention of thinkers and vitalize the work of reformers, it must present a doctrine of Jesus that is human and historical. Just so far as the force of these facts is felt,— and sooner or later all must yield to it,— the humanity of Jesus must be accepted.

The point I wish to emphasize is this: In view of the testimonies just given, which report the inevitable trend of religious thought, we may confidently affirm that there is no longer need for more debate on this point. The old textual and dogmatic arguments are not only pointless, but practically obsolete.

This is great relief and gain for both conservative and liberal. The *humanity of Jesus* may now be assumed like the law of gravitation. It is fast becoming an essential part of the thought of the world. Having, therefore, put behind us the old notions, and having reached a wider outlook upon human life, we find ourselves facing a new field of opportunity in religion. The religious teacher may now devote himself to scores of more interesting and practical themes. He now has more time for the spirit and message of Jesus as they apply to common human experience. He can come down from the vague mysticism of the triune God and press home the pleadings and inspirations of Jesus to godliness.

The task at present before us is to work from this standpoint, and make the character and teaching of Jesus more vital and creative than ever before. We must use his educating personality to chasten every wayward activity and to unfold every dormant human capacity. We must bring to bear his self-control and self-sacrifice to extinguish the animal selfishness. We must apply his spirit to human society as an organic enthusiasm. We must present him as an infinite encouragement to every one in misery, temptation, and despair. We must bring his life to bear upon human hearts to make them pure, heroic, loving, and fruitful in every good work. We must lead men through him to the discovery of God as Father and the recognition of their neighbor as a brother. All the indications of the hour show us that this is coming. The real human Jesus will be more loved, honored, and obeyed than the Christ of the creeds.

IX The answer to the question, What is salvation?
Salvation is involved in the larger question, What is this universe? If we live in a miracle-universe, where God sits just above the clouds as a bookkeeper, making black marks against our names as we sin, and then rubbing them out if we will believe certain things about the sacrificial Christ, then the way of salvation is very easy. But no such universe as that

really exists. The whole scheme is the childish fancy of a far-off time. In the real universe our sins make their mark, but the sinner can turn from his sins. The Infinite Father is always at hand ready to help him repent. He does not demand satisfaction, but righteousness. The old scars cannot be hidden behind the cross, but they can be outgrown. Our sins are not debts for which some one must settle, but defects which we must conquer and outgrow. Jesus does not rescue us from the punishment of our sins, but he helps us shed our sinfulness.

When men believed in a miracle-universe they imagined that, after doing wrong for a lifetime, they could step, in a moment, under a faucet of supernatural grace and be washed clean, and, by pressing a button, an angel would come with a white robe, and, clothed in the merits of Jesus, they could go triumphantly into heaven! But that theological dreamland has faded away. No such universe exists. The way to heaven is always open before the sinner. But it opens through repentance and righteousness. It runs, not through the blood shed on Calvary, but through the spirit of love which Jesus sublimely illustrated on the cross. The angels are near to robe us in white if we live a white life from the heart out. The way of salvation in the real universe is the way of spiritual growth and beneficent service. Jesus is divine helpfulness to any soul so far, and only so far, as he moves that soul to live as he lived.

A Creator who needs propitiation is not Jesus' merciful Father, but a monster. When we represent God as engaged in imputing the merits of Jesus to sinners, and passing them into heaven under cover of his blood, we strip God of the attributes that make him worthy our respect and love. The teaching that God will accept belief in Jesus' self-sacrificing love for loving-kindness itself, is tainted with atheism. If God be God, he will not bargain with himself, nor allow us to hide behind the cross; he will help man to be the goodness which he demands and which alone is salvation! From such traffic at

the throne, which was the way of salvation described by the old theologians, it would be a relief to escape into agnosticism. Salvation is not a commercial transaction but the enrichment of life; it is not an escape from punishment but a growth toward perfection.

If man is what history declares him to be, there was no fall of Adam, and all the redemptive schemes rooted in that fiction become unreal and needless. If man is what education and philanthropy prove him to be, he has native capacity for progress, reform, and divine service. If man's needs are what our daily experiences illustrate, his way of salvation lies through culture, character, repentance, and self-sacrifice. If God is what the discoveries of science indicate, the talk about sacrificial propitiation is little less than profanity. If the declaration of moral science is correct that merit cannot be transferred by imputation, the scheme of sacrificial atonement has no basis in reality. If Jesus' teaching is true that God is a divine Father who simply demands repentance and righteousness, then salvation is the love and purity which all — Christian and Non-Christian — may possess. And if really a divine Father, God will give all human beings an opportunity to acquire some fraction of these saving graces, whether they hear of Jesus or not.

As Unitarians, we affirm the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that "character" is salvation. Purity, love, justice, reverence, and mercy are the essentials of religion. We are friends of God so far as we are forgiving, helpful, devout, and truthful. We are in heaven so far as we live the heavenly life. Our spirituality is our salvation. But here it ought to be frankly stated that *salvation* is not a term in common use among Unitarians, partly because they object to the false views of life so long associated with it (the implications of total depravity, captivity by Satan, and God's wrath), but chiefly because they feel that what man really needs is something much larger than *the mere release from punishment*, which has too often been the

main thought. They emphasize the necessity of turning from wrong-doing, but the most important duty is growth in wisdom and righteousness: the realization of one's divine possibility.

x As children of the living God, we feel the assurance of a future life. God gives man this immortal **Immortality** hope. It persists as an irresistible and indestructible conviction in the human heart. And as God gives it to man, he is responsible for its fulfilment. God does not give birds wings for flight and no air in which to fly. In yielding ourselves to this great yearning of the heart we lean on the integrity of the universe. God cannot be so cruel as to create in us a false hope. No just parent would raise an expectation in his child merely to deceive it. He who is truth cannot feed men upon lies. Our nature, the workmanship of God, compels this anticipation; we must trust it.

Our destiny will be shaped by the quality of our life. We shall import to that heavenly realm whatever heavenly things we shall have imported into our hearts here. The day of judgment is forever in progress, because everything bears fruit and makes a record. We always stand in God's presence, and at the bar of an infinite justice that is infinite love. The divine forgiveness follows the human forgiveness. We are forgiven in so far as we are forgiving, regardless of creed or race or time or place. This is the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth.

As this life is vastly more than a mere *probation*, we cannot think of the future opportunity of progress as simply a "future probation." But as the doors are open here for repentance and reform, we believe that this will be equally true in the life after death. He who has been our loving Father here, will not become a cruel monster the moment after the transition which we call dying. But it would not pay to sin to-day, if we should have a million chances to repent in the million years to come. We still insist that sorrow will last as long as sin lasts; and though the door of heaven shall forever remain open, no one can go in without love and purity.

An eternal hell is impossible in a universe that all belongs to God. To believe in it is so far to deny the Eternal Goodness. The object of punishment is not vindictive but disciplinary, not retribution but education. If the indeterminate sentence is a wise method for the management of criminals, it is a good policy for the universe in the discipline of sinners. The fear of torment is not the motive that creates heaven ; it may restrain an uplifted hand, but it never commissioned a Good Samaritan. There is surely no encouragement to sin in believing that God will continue to be as good as our own hearts, which would save all. The philanthropic men and women who work to-day to rescue every wanderer can no longer believe that the infinite Love who moves them to compassion will himself overwhelm the same wanderers with everlasting misery because of the sin committed during a fleeting moment or from failure to believe an abstruse dogma. And to say that God cannot save all because the human will may finally resist all his efforts, is practically to abolish God himself. It is to make man infinite and God finite.

XI
Sacraments Unitarians do not consider church ordinances as sacraments with supernatural saving power. They follow here the freedom of the spirit, insisting that nothing shall be done as a mere formality, sacred because ancient. Sanctity inheres only in utility. That only is helpful which educates the soul and represents a vital experience. In many Unitarian churches *Communion* is observed, but always as a purely memorial service, free from sacrificial reference or symbolism. Adult baptism is practically unknown, but the *Christening* of children is felt by many to be both beautiful and helpful, emphasizing in an impressive manner parental joys and responsibilities. There are some who feel that both these services are too closely associated with outgrown superstitions to be any longer helpful.

In joining the church (increasing emphasis is rightfully laid upon the ceremony), the new member signs the Bond of Union,

or Covenant, and receives from the minister the *Right Hand of Fellowship*. By the attendance of sympathizing witnesses and by appropriate remarks, this ceremony is made an impressive and helpful event in the life of the individual and the church. The young people of the parish are prepared for it by a *Confirmation Class*, in which (commonly during Lent) they are taught the principles and trained in the sentiments that constitute our religious movement.

OUR GOSPEL AS DESCRIBED BY OUR LEADERS

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

made this statement: "Unitarianism is in harmony with the great and clear principles of revelation; with the laws and powers of human nature; with the dictates of the moral sense; with the noblest instincts and highest aspirations of the soul; and with the lights which the universe throws on the character of its author. We can hold this doctrine without self-contradiction, without rebelling against our rational and moral powers, without putting to silence the divine monitor in the breast. And this is an unspeakable benefit; for a religion thus coincident with reason, conscience, and our whole spiritual being, has the foundations of universal empire in the breast; and the heart, finding no resistance in the intellect, yields itself wholly, cheerfully, without doubts or misgivings, to the love of its Creator."

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE

briefly stated in the following words the five leading principles of the Unitarian religion commended by Dr. Channing:

- I. The Fatherhood of God.
- II. The Brotherhood of Man.
- III. The Leadership of Jesus.
- IV. Salvation by Character.
- V. Progress upward and onward forever.

JAMES MARTINEAU

gave this summary of the Unitarian faith: "We believe that when Christianity shall be reborn from its temporary eclipse it will rise again with two commandments instead of ten — the love of God and the love of man; with the beatitudes in place of the creeds; with a doctrine of self-sacrifice of the human heart in place of a doctrine of atonement; with a belief in the incarnation of God in humanity in the place of the personal incarnation of God in Jesus Christ; and that by degrees when that day shall come, man will be united to his Maker by tenderer, deeper, and more powerful ties than yet have been known, and that religion will assert a power greater, more comprehensive, and more healing to man's differences than the world has ever yet seen."

PRESIDENT CHARLES W. ELIOT,

of Harvard University, has forcibly described in these words the conviction commonly held among Unitarians respecting Jesus: "He spread abroad, and commended to the minds of many men, the loftiest ethical conceptions the race had won. He vitalized them by his winning and commanding presence, and sent them flying abroad on the wings of his own beautiful and heroic spirit. In a barbarous age he was inevitably given the reward of deification, just as the Pharaohs and Alexanders and Cæsars were; and his memory was surrounded by clouds of marvel and miracle during the four or five generations which passed before the Gospels took any settled form. The nineteenth century has done much to disengage him in the Protestant mind from these encumbrances; and the twentieth century will do more to set him forth simply and grandly as the loveliest and best of human seers, teachers, and heroes. Let no man fear that reverence and love for Jesus will diminish as time goes on. The pathos and the heroism of his life and death will be vastly heightened when he is relieved of all supernatural attributes and powers. The human hero must

not have foreknowledge of the glorious issue of his sacrifices and pains; he must not be sure that his cause will triumph; he must suffer and die without knowing what his sacrifice will bring forth. The human exemplar should have only human gifts and faculties. If these principles are true, the more completely progressive liberalism detects and rejects the misunderstandings and superstitions with which the oral tradition and written record concerning the life of Jesus were inevitably corrupted, the more will love and reverence grow for the splendors of truth and moral beauty which, as a matter of indubitable fact, have shone from the character and teachings of this Jewish youth."

BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM

THE assertion is often made: The Unitarians have never done anything to help the world. It is true that we have not done as much as we ought. And in discussing this subject we would not foster an unseemly pride or indulge in boasting. But we are willing to let the facts speak for themselves. The record shows that Unitarians have been fruitful in good works far beyond what could reasonably have been expected of them.

I Our American churches have never embraced more
Literature than *one two-hundredth* part of the population of the United States. If, therefore, our people have contributed one two-hundredth to the various beneficent activities of our country, our faith will show an average fruitfulness. Any larger proportion than this means so much extra credit. Let us then, from this point of view, consider a few facts.

On the ceiling of the vestibule of the Boston Public Library are the names of some score and a half Americans who have been most eminent in art and literature, in law and science. Of those belonging to the nineteenth century nearly *four-fifths* are the names of Unitarians — some hundred and fifty times

our proportion! Chief Justice Coleridge of England, in making an address at a banquet when in this country a few years ago, referred to the American authors most known and honored abroad. Every one whom he mentioned was a Unitarian!

In any list of the thirty most eminent Americans in literature that may be made, we shall find at the head Emerson, and after him will come Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Bryant, Bancroft, Motley, Prescott, Parkman, Margaret Fuller, Miss Alcott, Channing, Julia Ward Howe, Thoreau, Hawthorne, — we will not include Whittier, although he and others, while not nominally Unitarians, yet held Unitarian views in religion. We can claim at least half the names in such a list, however made up, and these by far the most distinguished. Or, in other words, about a hundred times our proportion.

Another list of names could be made of those distinctly or essentially Unitarian, that would contain as many distinguished persons as could be found outside our fellowship, such as: Bayard Taylor, George William Curtis, Helen Hunt, Bret Harte, Henry C. Lea, Edwin P. Whipple, William R. Alger, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, O. B. Frothingham, Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney, John Fiske, Jared Sparks, George Ripley, Charles Eliot Norton, James T. Fields, Richard Hildreth, J. T. Trowbridge, and many others. And we do not mention here many eminent persons who will appear in some other line of activity. In the series of biographies known as "American Men of Letters," published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., *eleven* of the eighteen are the lives of Unitarians, not including the Unitarian Quaker, Whittier.

We have not been as active in sending preachers to foreign parts to plant churches as other religious bodies. But we have put "books of life" into the hands of millions from the logging camp of Maine to the miner's hut on the Rockies. We would not depreciate the work of others, for there are diversities of divine service; but we contend that a church which has made it possible to put the poems of Longfellow

and the essays of Emerson into the sod house in Kansas has done as true and noble *missionary* work as was ever done by circuit rider. Both kinds of work were needed, and let each church honor the other's mission. We do not claim that the literary pre-eminence of these men was solely due to their Unitarian views, nor do we hold that Unitarians are necessarily especially gifted with literary genius; but it is fair to appeal to them as an illustration of what Unitarians have done for the world.

II In the "History of Education" by the well known
Education French author, Compayré, the two names mentioned in the chapter on the United States are William Ellery Channing and Horace Mann — both Unitarians! When we add to these the names of Elizabeth P. Peabody, the pioneer in Kindergarten work in America; William G. Eliot, our apostle of all the humanities at St. Louis and the founder of Washington University; Ezra Cornell, who made the institution bearing his name possible; Peter Cooper, who created Cooper Institute, a pioneer in its line; Jonas G. Clark, who created Clark University; Dr. Samuel G. Howe, the teacher of the blind; President Charles W. Eliot, who in reorganizing and developing Harvard University has done a monumental work for education in America, — we have at least a quarter of the names of those most influential in the educational progress of our land during the past century, — a number out of all proportion to our size as a religious body.

III Some of the activities along these lines have already
Philanthropies been indicated: but there are others to be added,
and Reforms and they may be represented by the following names: Joseph Tuckerman, the first in this country to organize charity work (in Boston) according to what we now know as approved scientific methods; Dorothea L. Dix, the world's greatest philanthropist among women; Henry Berg, who inaugurated the work for the suppression of cruelty to animals; John Pierpont, the fiery advocate of all reforms, but more

especially temperance ; Susan B. Anthony, Mary A. Livermore, Samuel J. May, names that represent some of the noblest efforts ever made for the higher life of the race ; Henry W. Bellows, who was the creative and presiding genius of the Sanitary Commission ; Edward Everett Hale, wonderfully fertile in suggestion, setting multitudes at work in many ways for human helpfulness. When we add Dr. Channing, who sowed the seed from which a world-wide harvest of humanities has ripened, we have ten in any list of the twenty-five names of the most eminent Americans belonging to this class. Nearly a hundredfold more than our proportion !

IV
Civil Service Reform No civic movement, in our national history during recent years, has represented a higher moral impulse or been more beneficial to our political life than the reform of our Civil Service. The man who started this agitation, Representative Jenckes of Rhode Island, was a Unitarian. Rev. Dr. James Freeman Clarke and Rev. Dr. Henry W. Bellows (Unitarians) were for a long time the only clergymen of prominence who gave this reform earnest and untiring support. George William Curtis and Dorman B. Eaton (both Unitarians) shared, with Carl Schurz, the leadership of this great movement. The two men who were its most valiant and powerful advocates in the Senate for years were Hoar and Burnside (Unitarians). Though the smallest of churches, we have played the largest part in this vital reformation of our national life.

V
Statesmen and Jurists In a work just published, "The Men who made the Nation," by Professor Sparks of Chicago University, the contributions of a dozen men to our national life are described. Of these, two were definitely Unitarian, — John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Four others held our religious views, — Benjamin Franklin, Horace Greeley (Universalist), Daniel Webster, and Abraham Lincoln, who, though not wearing the Unitarian name, defined his religious position in exactly the words in which our National Conference

describes its platform : Love to God and love to Man. It is universally admitted that Washington, though an attendant at the Episcopal church, agreed substantially with the religious opinions of his Unitarian friends, Adams and Jefferson. Two other Presidents have been Unitarians, — John Quincy Adams and Millard Fillmore. In the catalogue of distinguished statesmen who have held our faith, we find these, beside many others : Edward Everett, Charles Sumner, John C. Calhoun, and the great war governors John A. Andrew and Austin Blair. It is an interesting and significant fact that *nine* of the twenty-eight persons included in the “American Statesmen Series” (Houghton, Mifflin, & Co.) were Unitarians — vastly more than what could reasonably be called our share.

Among jurists of highest national renown may be mentioned Joseph Story, Theophilus Parsons, Lemuel Shaw, Samuel F. Miller, and John Marshall (the recent doubts raised in reference to his religious position on the Unitarian side are vague and trivial). We have here about a score of prominent Americans who would be included among the hundred most eminent public men in America. Many others, like Thomas M. Cooley, have held our views though nominally connected with other churches.

VI The mention of five names will show that we have
Religious not been destitute of powerful advocates of a most
Leaders spiritual and affirmative Gospel, — William Ellery Channing, called, by Baron Bunsen, “a prophet of the Christian consciousness of the future,” whose pages are deserving a far wider study than they receive ; Orville Dewey, the impassioned advocate of a most practical piety ; Theodore Parker, “the Jupiter of the American pulpit ;” Thomas Starr King, regal as a king in pulpit power and brilliant as a star in spiritual illumination ; Frederick Henry Hedge, in whose “Ways of the Spirit” thousands have found peace and by whose “Reason in Religion” thousands have been delivered from doubt and superstition. We say it in humility, without boasting : We have

been only a small handful of people, and often accused of doing nothing for the world, but we are willing to match these religious teachers, for eloquence, spirituality, inspiration to philanthropy, and general influence upon the life of the nation, with an equal number of men produced by the largest churches in the land.

VII
Hymn
Writers

Unitarians are often condemned as cold and unspiritual. Many have lacked the gift of enthusiasm. This defect is, however, probably more due to the New England temperament than to the Unitarian faith. This form of religious sentiment cannot, however, be destitute of spirituality, for it has produced many of the hymns most popular in all churches. To whatever church we may go, if we look into the hymn-book there used, we shall find hymns by Sears, Johnson, Longfellow (Samuel), Chadwick, Gannett, Hosmer, Furness, Hedge, and others (to refer only to American Unitarians), — a fact which reminds us that, while we may have opposed much in the creeds of the other churches, we have made large contributions to their worship. This appeal to the *hymn-books* shows that what we have done to enrich the songs of the sanctuary is far in excess of our numerical strength. The proportion of hymns in general use and written by Unitarians is everywhere surprisingly large.

In 1892 appeared an attractive little book, "The World's Best Hymns," by Prof. J. W. Churchill of Andover Theological Seminary, a competent authority who would not, however, be likely to make a selection too favorable to us. The author presents nearly a hundred hymns, ancient and modern, that he considers most worthy of honor. Of those written in the nineteenth century, about *one-fifth* are the works of Unitarians, some *forty* times our proportion, showing certainly a reasonable fruitfulness in devotional poetry.

Recently tablets were dedicated in the Hall of Fame in New York City to twenty-nine distinguished Americans who had been selected for these highest honors by the votes of a large and competent jury. Of this number, the following

twelve, or eighty times our proportion, were Unitarians: Emerson, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Horace Mann, Peter Cooper, Channing, John Marshall, Joseph Story, John Adams, Franklin, Jefferson, and Webster.

This brief record of things done for the higher life of man, the common life of humanity, is not made for self-glorification. The object has not been to claim superiority over our brothers in other churches. We gladly admit that they can show a long line of saints and heroes. They, too, can decorate themselves with many illustrious names.

Our sole purpose has been to make it clear that Unitarians have been reasonably active in good works; and that this faith cannot be condemned as unfruitful. The record proves that we have done a fair share of the work for the enrichment of human life and the amelioration of its miseries. This form of faith has not destroyed the humanitarian sentiment; rather it has fostered philanthropic efforts of every kind.

The record in our behalf could easily be made much stronger than it has been stated. Wherever there are Unitarians they are active in all humanitarian enterprises. They generally take the initiative in many beautiful ministries, like the Flower Mission, the Country Week, the Free Kindergarten, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Organization of Charity. Many activities have not here been mentioned, and many distinguished laborers have not been named for lack of space. For obvious reasons chief attention has been given to past rather than present worthies.

In closing this brief statement, one important fact must be made clear: Unitarians, unlike many other religious people, always work upon the broad platform of universal humanity. We have given most liberally to hospitals, refuges, homes for dependents, and schools; but this has never been done in a sectarian spirit or for denominational glory. We have never used our benefactions to advertise our creed, nor have we limited our charities to church lines. We have founded no

Unitarian hospitals. That has not been our ideal or method. On this account people in general are often not aware of what we have actually done.

SLOW GROWTH

SOMETIMES the Unitarian church is ridiculed because it is such a small body, and we are tauntingly told that our slow growth proves that our form of religion is unfitted for common people.

There is, perhaps, some dishonor in being so few in number ; and we have undoubtedly had some faults (deficient warmth and lack of church enterprise) that have done something to prevent a rapid growth. There is, however, nothing so abstruse in our teachings as to place them beyond the average intelligence. Ours is the plainest and simplest Gospel anywhere preached. It requires no great effort of head or heart to understand our affirmations. This is fully proved by the fact that thousands of the common people in all Protestant churches substantially believe with us to-day, as every one is aware.

The chief obstacle in the way of a wide acceptance of our views in the past has lain in another direction. It is this: Those who come to us have to *reconstruct* their religious opinions and ideals. This is always a difficult and often a painful process, — to take down old idols and set up new ideals. This task does require courage, patience, and thoughtfulness. To get rid of inherited notions and prejudices is a difficult work, more difficult than many can perform. But this must be done first. And when done the acceptance of our Gospel is an easy gladness. In a wide experience of a quarter of a century, both among college students and the common people, this fact stands out clear and impressive before me: The difficulty in winning people to the Unitarian position is not inherent in our doctrines. It is the *dead-hand* of Tradition. It is easy enough to explain our principles ; it is hard for people to rid themselves of prejudice and superstition.

But in a general way Unitarians have reaped as they have sown. We have grown slowly as a denomination because we have not sown sectarianism. We have exerted an influence out of all proportion to our numbers, as the facts in the preceding pages demonstrate ; and we have done this because we have striven to enrich the general life of humanity. We have had missionary zeal, but it has run to *nation-making* rather than *church-organization*. Unitarians have elected this larger service, not because indifferent to the church and destitute of love for religion, but because they saw so many other things to do that seemed more important than changing a man's theological opinion, and also because they have never taken a narrow view of the church as the *only* agent of salvation. They have loved religion, but they have loved it as something larger and deeper than dogmatic belief or ecclesiastical machinery.

If the energies that have gone into literature, education, and reform (giving us a harvest in these directions far in excess of what could be expected of us) had been applied to church extension, we should, as Jefferson predicted, have become one of the large religious bodies in the land. But these energies could not work in both directions. Our people were not idle, but their service was humanitarian rather than ecclesiastical. Therefore we must be judged by what we did in our own line, not by what we failed to do along the line of ambition so often followed by other churches. In the very nature of the case, a body suspicious of sectarianism and concerned about humanity in general, could not do great things *as a sect*.

The truth is, Unitarians chose to do a *national* rather than a *denominational* work, and they must be judged accordingly. While others were out on the frontier organizing churches, our best minds were writing the books that have enriched the homes and filled the libraries of that frontier. While others were giving their money to church enterprises, our rich men, like Amos and Abbott Lawrence, were giving their fortunes to help all other enterprises except Unitarian missions, even

endowing Orthodox colleges! This was, perhaps, a mistake, but it was not done because they had no interest in their own church. It was because they saw so much to appreciate in all the churches; and also they felt that there was something more necessary in the world than to force their personal theological opinions upon others.

While the laymen of other churches were laboring heroically to extend their particular Zion, ours, like Dorman B. Eaton and George William Curtis, were using all their energies to reform the Civil Service. Both kinds of work were needed, and the larger churches have done both; but we gave ourselves so exclusively (perhaps unwisely) to these civic and humanitarian enterprises that little or no energy was left for church extension. And just because of this fact we are able to show a large surplus of national enrichment to our credit.

Suppose, for example, that Theodore Parker had used his splendid powers and vast enthusiasm to build up a denomination, as did Alexander Campbell. To-day we should have Unitarian churches by the thousand instead of the hundred. But he worked for other objects: for the freedom of the slave and for the intellectual and spiritual quickening of America. He practically sent out none to found churches; instead he planted our land everywhere with young men and women who have been leaders in every philanthropic, educational, and reformatory movement. This certainly was worth doing.

Peter Cartwright sowed the Mississippi Valley with Methodist churches. This was a magnificent work. Thomas Starr King might have planted the seed on the Pacific coast from which hundreds of Unitarian churches would have grown. Instead he saved California to the Union cause. It was better so. The great enthusiasm of Rev. Dr. Henry W. Bellows, if devoted exclusively to church affairs, would perhaps have increased our denomination as fast, proportionately, as Bishop Simpson enlarged the bounds of Methodism. But he gave himself to the Sanitary Commission and helped

as much as any general to save the Union. This was worth more than a thousand new Unitarian churches. Thus we see that the chief reason for our slow growth as a sect is in many ways creditable to the Unitarians themselves.

But our growth as a church has not been as slow in recent years as many suppose. In the score of years from 1880 to 1900 the Unitarian churches in America increased 35 per cent, nearly as fast as the growth in population, — a ratio that compares very favorably with that of the larger churches. In the same period the contributions to the American Unitarian Association for missionary purposes have doubled. The activities of the Woman's Alliance, of the Sunday School Society, and the Post Office Mission in the free distribution of religious literature are probably over four times as great to-day as they were in 1880.

But the chief growth of the Unitarian faith has been within what are called the Orthodox churches. The leading thoughts of Channing are preached every Sunday morning in thousands of pulpits that are not Unitarian in name. The views of Parker, Hedge, and Clarke are substantially accepted by hundreds of the progressive ministers in all the Protestant denominations. Hardly a remnant of the old Orthodoxy is left in any prominent city pulpit. It still stands written in the creeds, but it has little or no part in the vital convictions of intelligent people. In the religious newspapers of the land, what have passed as commonplaces among us for years are constantly set forth as discoveries. Frequently an editorial full of Unitarianism stands side by side with a condemnation of the Unitarian church! Everywhere people boast of their liberality and their indifference to creeds, — admirable when done with sincerity. We, as a church, are not responsible for all of this, though we have done our part to bring it about. It is due largely to the "Time-Spirit." This way of thinking and feeling in religion is now abroad in the land. So that, while our *church* grows slowly, our *ideal* is becoming victorious.

On this account some carelessly say: The work of the Unitarian church is done! Yes, indeed, if its work was ever simply to destroy Orthodoxy as a creed; for the old Orthodoxy as a method and system of thought is dead. But no true Unitarian ever so understood or described the Unitarian mission. The task of the Unitarian church has been something infinitely larger and vastly nobler — the cultivation of a rational and spiritual form of piety for the enlargement of humanity in general. From this point of view, the Unitarian church was never more needed than to-day. The growing liberality of other churches no more ends our mission than does the growing enlightenment of the community make the doctor unnecessary. The need was never greater than at present for agencies of ethical quickening and spiritual training. The enemy to be fought is not dogmatism but worldliness. We must use our freedom to establish the noblest ideals in society and in politics.

OUR SUPREME ASPIRATION

I THE Unitarian strives to represent and embody in
New personal character and civic institution, the New
Christianity Christianity which is rising all about us and which is the simple but mighty gospel of Jesus, enriched by science and democracy, enforced by the philanthropic impulse, and operated through the educational method. It puts character-building above creed-making, deeds of love above dogmas of wrath, service above sacrament, obedience to moral law above belief in theological statements. It makes the Golden Rule central. It uses the Sermon on the Mount rather than the Nicene creed as the chart of life. It appeals to love instead of fear. It encourages growth and discovery rather than conformity of opinion. It pleads for brotherhood and co-operation. It insists on freedom. It uses the Bible, not to make a creed, but to enrich the life.

The New Christianity finds the service of God in helpfulness to man, the way to heaven in the path of righteousness, the sure salvation in perfected manhood, the only authority in love and reason, an adequate basis of religious organization in a common purpose to be good, and to do good: all truth its scripture, all men its field and fellowship, all loving souls its saints and ministers, a kingdom of heaven for all on earth its ideal and aspiration.

II
Unitarian Church We strive to make the Unitarian church the efficient agent and organic expression of the New Christianity. We pour into its worship the warmth and gladness of an impassioned love for God, the Father of all. We keep our hymns and prayers free from selfish importunity, offensive exhortation, and doctrinal discussion. We make them the simple but earnest outpouring of trustful hearts, wholly intent on personal communion with our Creator. We would shun the trivial speech and flippant spirit that destroy true reverence. We would be free from the mournful tone and affected gravity that spread gloom without bringing solemnity. We would cultivate the dignity and the enthusiasm of a saintly but joyous piety. We would make our worship so catholic, so tender, so vital, that all, of whatever theological opinion, may feel themselves at "the east window of divine surprise." Then tears shall cease, burdens shall fall, and the ecstasy of pure devotion shall fill the soul.

In the pulpit of this church stands a teacher of sacred things to speak with absolute sincerity, with perfect freedom, and with forceful conviction. He will affirm more than he will deny, using most often words of comfort and of cheer. The pulpit is a watch-tower from which he scans the outer heavens and reports all discoveries that bear upon conduct. To it he fetches out of the depths of his heart, and applies to others for constraint and inspiration, all the spiritual and spiritualizing truths of his own experience. He uses all facts so far as he can make them into a gospel. He is a teacher,

but a teacher of right living, not intent on making converts to a creed, but anxious only that his message carry repentance to sinners, hope to the sad, and comfort to the suffering, as well as joy and inspiration to the strong and courageous. He administers the spirit of Jesus to enrich and ennoble human life. He tells that wonderful story to make men strong, pure, forgiving, and loving. He uses the Bible to make powerful in human affairs its great lesson of righteousness, — the righteousness of the heart that brings peace.

We insist that the church is a precious and paramount institution, because human nature is essentially religious. Religion is not only an important part of life, it is a part that needs wise and careful training. Therefore, those who neglect the church neglect what is highest in themselves and most useful to civilization. Indifference to religious nurture and church service is indifference to our humanity proper. The great spiritual gifts and graces, to cultivate which is the task of the church, are no more likely to spring up in us spontaneously than the mastery of a musical instrument or the command of a foreign tongue. If we are to gather the harvest, we must plant the seed and cultivate the soil.

We cannot have the beauty and serenity of life in home and neighborhood that are bound up with the Sabbath, unless we maintain the religious uses of this day of rest. And we make the best use of Sunday only when we use it to expand what is best within us, and spend its hours in a manner radically different than we do the other days of the week. We cannot possess and preserve the great moral and spiritual convictions and enthusiasms which make for peace and righteousness, unless we loyally support this institution — the church — created for the development of the religious life and consecrated to the service of the highest and noblest interests of the human race.

The neglect of the religious training of children is not only an injury to them but a sin against civilization. We are under a heavier obligation to give our children the best religion that

we have found than we are to have them correctly taught in music or mathematics.

III
The
Real
Unitarian

Out of this church, alive with various educational and philanthropic activities, all imbued with the religious purpose and devoted to religious ends, we strive to send forth into the world to be a part of its best life the real Unitarian, a man who demands freedom for himself and grants the same liberty to his neighbor; who bestows his love broadly regardless of sect, fellowships all seekers for the truth, and labors for man on account of his need rather than his creed; who follows reason as the authority for truth and conscience as the guide to conduct, allowing no text or tradition to blind the eye or enslave the heart, and always striving to be wiser to-day than yesterday and better to-morrow than to-day.

The real Unitarian is one who believes that it is diviner to do a deed of love than to subscribe to any form of doctrine; who holds that religion is spiritual worship, personal righteousness, and helpful service; and who learns from Jesus to be forgiving, merciful, and useful.

The real Unitarian is one who sees the universe under a law that is love, finds nature interwoven with Fatherhood, and beholds God immanent in all souls; who traces the divine revelation in all discoveries of truth; and who has faith that Providence embraces humanity, and that all wanderers will some day find their way home to the Infinite Goodness.

And these great root-truths and imperial sentiments, so widely shared in varying measures by others, being no monopoly of ours, will help us all to march forward through life, serene under abuse, patient in disappointments, heroic in danger, victorious in temptation, helpful with love and cheerful with hope in our little corner, feeling that the dear God is our Father, and that beyond the grave lies in immortal light and blessedness the household of our affections.

APPENDIX

LITERATURE

THE following works are historical, and they tell the story of the Unitarian movement :

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| I. A Short History of Unitarianism since the Reformation. | \$0.50. |
| Rev. Frederick B. Mott. | |
| II. Unitarianism since the Reformation. 254 pp. | 1.50. |
| Rev. Joseph Henry Allen, D.D. | |
| III. Old and New Unitarian Belief. 246 pp. | 1.50. |
| Rev. John W. Chadwick. | |
| IV. Unitarianism: Origin and History. 400 pp. | 1.00. |
| Lectures by Sixteen Eminent Unitarians. | |
| V. Heads of English Unitarian History. 138 pp. | .60. |
| Rev. Alexander Gordon. | |
| VI. A Historical Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the
Unitarian Christian Doctrine in Modern Times. | .10. |

The Unitarian Affirmations respecting religion are fully described in these books, — that by Channing is especially rich in other directions :

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| I. Channing, Works. 1 vol. 1060 pp. | \$1.00. |
| II. Parker, Views of Religion: Selections. 1 vol. 466 pp. | 1.00. |
| III. Dewey, Works. 1 vol. 804 pp. | 1.00. |
| IV. Our Unitarian Gospel. 282 pp. | 1.00. |
| Rev. Minot J. Savage, D.D. | |
| V. The Power and Promise of the Liberal Faith. 145 pp. | .75. |
| Rev. Thomas R. Slicer. | |
| VI. Positive Aspects of Unitarian Christianity. 274 pp. | .75. |
| By English Writers with Introduction by Dr. Martineau. | |
| VII. Forward Movement Lectures. 99 pp. | .40. |
| Rev. Brooke Herford, D.D. | |

These books can be ordered from the American Unitarian Association, 25 Beacon St., Boston, Mass., and to this body may also be addressed inquiries in regard to Unitarian work and organization.

The following pamphlets (from 16 to 40 pp.) give the views commonly held by Unitarians upon the subjects of which they treat, and they are sent *free* on application to the American Unitarian Association, Boston, Mass. :

- (1) The Faith of a Free Church : Rev. S. M. Crothers, D.D.
- (2) What do Unitarians Believe? Rev. Charles W. Wendt .
- (3) Unitarianism. Rev. Rush R. Shippen.
- (4) Our Gospel. Rev. M. J. Savage, D.D.
- (5) Unitarian Principles. Rev. Edward Everett Hale, D.D.
- (6) The Main Lines of Religion as held by Unitarians. By Rev. Brooke Herford, D.D.
- (7) Unitarianism : it is a Positive Faith, and rightly claims our Loyalty. By Rev. Minot J. Savage, D.D.
- (8) The Church of the Spirit. By Rev. Francis G. Peabody, D.D.
- (9) God . . . Rev. Samuel R. Calthrop, LL.D.
- (10) The Real Jesus. Rev. Howard N. Brown.
- (11) The Bible in Theology. Rev. W. W. Fenn.
- (12) The Immortal Hope. Rev. John W. Chadwick.
- (13) The Theology of Unitarians. Rev. Charles C. Everett, D.D.
- (14) Incarnation. Rev. William C. Gannett.
- (15) Eternal Punishment. Rev. Thomas Starr King.

